

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
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STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

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HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

Testimony of
DAWN N. S. CHANG
Chairperson

Before the Senate Committees on
WATER AND LAND
and
PUBLIC SAFETY AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL
AND MILITARY AFFAIRS
and
TRANSPORTATION AND CULTURE AND THE ARTS

Monday, February 12, 2024
3:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 225 & Videoconference

In consideration of
SENATE BILL 2088
RELATING TO VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

Senate Bill 2088 proposes to make appropriations to the Department of Land and Natural Resources and Department of Transportation for vegetation management projects to reduce the risks of wildfires across the State. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) strongly supports this measure, provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in the Executive FY 2025 Supplemental Budget Request.**

The Department's Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW) is the primary responder for wildland fires occurring on one million acres of forested watershed (26% of the State's land area) and co-responds with federal and county agencies for an additional 32% of lands in the state. DOFAW receives funds from the United States Forest Service through allocations and competitive grants to fund fuels reduction projects on DOFAW lands, however, these funds are insufficient to fund all the vegetation management projects that DOFAW needs to undertake to properly ensure the protection of forested watersheds, rangelands, and the adjacent communities. DOFAW has requested \$2,425,000 be added to its operating budget for FY 2025 to fund fire related vegetation management. These funds may be used to leverage additional funds from competitive federal grants. The Department of Transportation (DOT) has significant fuel loads along roadways that require regular maintenance and should receive sufficient

funds to maintain these fuels to reduce the potential for accidental ignitions along roadways. The Department recommends that DOT consult with DOFAW and the county fire departments to prioritize vegetation management projects in fire prone areas and devise a maintenance schedule to reduce the ignition potential along roadways.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this measure.



Hawai'i Forest Industry Association

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Date: 02/09//24

TO: WTL Chair Inouye and Vice Chair Elefante, PSM Chair Wakai and Vice Chair Elefante, TCA Chair Lee and Vice Chair Inouye and WTL, PSM and TCA Committee Members Chang, McKelvey, Fevella, Fukunaga, Rhoads, Awa, Kanuha

FROM: the Hawai'i Forest Industry Association (HFIA)

SUBJECT: Testimony in Support of SB2088 Relating to Vegetation Management

Dear Chairs Inouye, Wakai, Lee and WTL/PSM/TCA Committee Members,

On behalf of the Directors and members of the Hawai'i Forest Industry Association (HFIA), please support SB2088 Relating to Vegetation Management.

The HFIA is in support of funding efforts to mitigate and prevent wildfires via vegetation management such as removing hazardous dry or dead leaf litter and brush and clearing firebreaks along roads and communities. However, the HFIA strongly urges State agencies as well as private entities to include, whenever possible, revegetation of areas overwhelmed by invasive species, with species native to those regions. We also encourage the use of native species in urban/residential planting, as opposed to fire-promoting exotic species. Restoring Hawaii's native ecosystems, whether in larger swaths of land via organized restoration/reforestation efforts, or from one back yard to the next, will naturally reduce fire risk.

The State should also consider addressing the factor of a warming climate by reforesting land that was once cattle grazed (now covered with high fire risk weeds and grasses), with species capable of high levels of carbon sequestration.

We hope that you will support SB2088 and the funding of wildfire mitigation efforts and encourage State and private agencies to utilize both native and high carbon sequestration species in their efforts.

Mahalo for your time and consideration,

Guy Cellier

Guy Cellier, President
Hawai'i Forest Industry Association

HFIA's mission is to promote healthy and productive forests and a sustainable forest industry through management, education, planning, information exchange, and advocacy. HFIA has over 130 members including woodworkers, landowners, sawyers, foundations, foresters, growers, educators, environmentalists, architects, millers, ranchers, and others interested in HFIA's mission and goals.

HFIA Board of Directors

Officers: President Guy Cellier, Vice President Irene Sprecher, Secretary Taylor Coons, Treasurer Wade Lee
Directors: Jeremy Campbell, Aaron Hammer, Nicholas Koch, Michael Sowards, Aileen Yeh



**Hawaiian
Electric**

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON
WATER & LAND
PUBLIC SAFETY & INTERGOVERNMENTAL & MILITARY AFFAIRS
AND
TRANSPORTATION & CULTURE & THE ARTS**

**SB 2088
Relating to Vegetation Management**

Monday, February 12, 2024
3:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 225

Dave Nagata
Land Agent
Hawaiian Electric

Dear Chairs Inouye, Wakai and Lee, Vice Chairs Elefante and Inouye, and Members of the Committees,

My name is Dave Nagata and I am testifying on behalf of Hawaiian Electric in strong support of SB 2088, Relating to Vegetation Management.

Wildfires have become a growing hazard across the state due to large areas of unmanaged land, climate change and other factors increasing the frequency of fire weather conditions and the availability of wildfire ignition sources. Vegetation management, including creating firebreaks and removing buildup of flammable vegetation, is essential for the mitigation of wildfire risks and promotes safer conditions for communities and the environment. However, scarcity of funding, personnel, long-term management and cooperation among landowners and other stakeholders, remain a huge challenge for state agencies to reduce the risks of wildfires. Appropriating funding to the Department of Land and Natural Resources and the Department of

Transportation for the purpose of promoting vegetation management to reduce the risk of wildfires across the state is necessary to serve the public interest.

Accordingly, Hawaiian Electric strongly supports SB 2088. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



KENNETH S. HARA
DIRECTOR OF EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT

JAMES DS. BARROS
ADMINISTRATOR OF
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
KA 'OIHANA PILI KAUA
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STATE OF HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 2088,
RELATING TO EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON
WATER AND LAND

BY

JAMES DS. BARROS
ADMINISTRATOR
HAWAI'I EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

FEBRUARY 12, 2024

Aloha Chair Inouye, Vice-Chair Elefante, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to **SUPPORT** Senate Bill 2088.

HI-EMA **strongly supports** Senate Bill 2088, which allocates funds to the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) and the Department of Transportation (DOT) to execute vegetation management projects aimed at mitigating the threat of wildfires throughout the state of Hawai'i.

The devastating consequences of wildfires, including loss of property, human lives, and ecological damage, necessitate proactive measures to reduce the risk of such disasters. Investing in vegetation management projects aligns with the principles of sound environmental stewardship. By implementing strategic measures to control and maintain vegetation growth, we can protect Hawai'i's diverse ecosystems, preserve native flora and fauna, and safeguard critical habitats. This approach ensures the long-term sustainability and resilience of our natural resources, benefiting both present and future generations.

These projects play a vital role in safeguarding public safety. By strategically managing vegetation in areas prone to wildfires, we can significantly reduce the potential for fire outbreaks and their subsequent spread.

This preventative approach not only protects communities and infrastructures, but also minimizes the risk faced by members of the county fire departments, who put their lives at risk when combating blazes.

By proactively addressing the root causes of wildfires, we can curtail the need for costly emergency response efforts, rehabilitation of affected areas, and potential litigation expenses. HI-EMA fully supports this legislative measure provided that its passage does not replace or adversely impact priorities indicated in the Executive Budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 2088.

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